620

MR LEDDY

THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

370

American Embassy,
Guatemala City, Guatemala,
November 24, 1953.

OFFICIAL - INFORMAL

SECRET - SECURITY INFORMATION

Dear John:

I am enclosing for your information the memorandum of a conversation which I had on November 18 with José Luis Arenas, one of the leading figures in the Partido Unificación Anticomunista, and Sr. Joaquín Ocaña who, it appears, is active in the same group. Sr. Arenas outlined his plans for causing the downfall of the Arbenz Administration by "civic pressure" by which I understand him to mean massive popular demonstrations. In his view, the scheme is sure to work, but he needs about $200,000 to do the job.

Also attached is a copy of a document which Sr. Ocaña brought in on November 23 and which was supposed to have been the PUA's concrete plan of action. Actually, it is a statement of general plans and provides little enlightenment.

In my conversation with Sr. Ocaña on November 23, I endeavored discreetly to ascertain what contact his group might have with other groups inside and outside the country. He indicated clearly that he d[illegible] not look with favor on Juan Córdova Cerna and Carlos Castillo Armas. He inquired what the State Department thought of Gen. Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes, to which I replied that I did not know the Department's views and that I personally had no views

714.00/11-2453

John W. Fisher, Esquire,
Guatemalan Desk Officer,
Room 4103, New State,
Department of State,
Washington, D. C.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE ARCHIVES
REVIEWED BY Rosalie 9/9/82

at all since the General had been outside the country since before I arrived in Guatemala. Sr. Ocaña hastily said that he was not personally an Ydigorista and left me in some doubt as to his group's attitude towards the General.

I am not impressed by the intellectual caliber of Sr. Arenas. His manner is a trifle "sly" and although I do not question the sincerity of his anti-Communist principles, I am still waiting for evidence of his ability as a political organizer.

It is apparent from these conversations that the Opposition is still deeply divided and that the old Liberals and Conservatives continue to regard one another with suspicion even though they are able to unite on the sole issue of anti-Communism. One recent commentator said that in any group of 20 Opposition figures, there were 19 candidates for the Presidency, and while this may be considerably exaggerated it serves to illustrate the difficulties of forming any sort of a united opposition in Guatemala.

You may wish to save these memos to show Ray Leddy when he returns as I think Sr. Arenas plans to call on him when he visits Washington.

Sincerely,

Bill

William L. Krieg

Enclosures:

1. Memorandum of Conversation
2. Copy of PUA document dated November 23, 1953

SECRET - SECURITY INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

American Embassy,
Guatemala City, Guatemala,
November 18, 1953.

Participants: Sr. José Luis ARENAS, Opposition Deputy in Congress

Sr. Joaquin OCAÑA

Mr. William L. Krieg

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Sr. Arenas and Sr. Ocaña called without appointment this afternoon and discussed the segment of the anti-Communist movement with which Sr. Arenas is affiliated. Sr. Arenas did virtually all the talking with Sr. Ocaña a silent spectator.

Sr. Arenas began with a historic review of recent Guatemalan revolutions commencing with the one which overthrew President Manuel Estrada Cabrera in 1921. This movement, he said, was a popular one which had used as its vehicle the Partido Unionista, a group ostensibly interested in founding a Central American union. The fall of Estrada Cabrera came about when mass demonstrations against him took place in Guatemala City, and the Army and police refused to repress the demonstrators.

Advancing to the more recent overthrow of General Jorge Ubico in 1944, Sr. Arenas said that Ubico had not been unpopular and that "almost a majority of the people" supported him. (Later in the conversation, Sr. Arenas said that "80%" of the people supported Ubico.) His downfall was brought about by the activities of professional men and students in Guatemala City and had in a sense been voluntary since the bulk of the Army still supported him.

Sr. Arenas went on to say that the "minutes of silence" in 1950 had almost succeeded in overthrowing AREVALO. It had reached the point that



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Arévalo had been forced to turn over control of the Government to Colonel Carlos PAZ Tejada, Chief of the Armed Forces; Paz Tejada had sent a hand written note to Sr. Manuel Cobos Batres, leader of the "Minutes of Silence" offering to accede to all his demands. Cobos Batres accepted Paz Tejada's offer and disbanded his adherents, after which Paz Tejada betrayed him by returning the Government to Arévalo.

Sr. Arenas said that the Partido Unificación Anticomunista (PUA) is well organized in all parts of the country, and it is his plan to attempt the overthrow of the Arbenz Administration by civic pressure of the same type which overthrew Estrada Cabrera and Ubico.

Mr. Krieg inquired what the crowd would do if the Army fired on them. Sr. Arenas implied that they would have means of self-defense and later said that he planned to utilize the "volunteers" who were organized in Ubico's day and drilled once a week for an hour in the plazas of all the rural communities. These people, he said, all understood the use of firearms.

Sr. Arenas then said that despite the PUA's official organization and its overwhelming popular support, it could not carry out its plan for lack of funds, and he inquired without ambiguity whether the Embassy could not furnish money for his campaign. He said "for $200,000, I could bring the entire Republic to Guatemala City." Mr. Krieg explained that the Embassy had no funds for such purposes and, in response to an inquiry, said it could not make even a "down payment" so that the campaign could get under way. Sr. Arenas then said that he planned to go to the United States in December, ostensibly to visit his wife and children who are there and that he would call at the Department of State and on Vice President Nixon and Senator Mundt to ascertain whether funds could be made available.

He said he would take a complete plan of his campaign along as evidence that it was well thought out and carefully organized.

Mr. Krieg said that he was sure officers of the State Department would be interested in talking with Sr. Arenas and offered to inform the Department in advance of his departure. Mr. Krieg stressed however that he could give no assurances that any assistance could be given and suggested the possibility that a private organization in the United States might be found which would be interested in supporting the anti-Communist movement in Gutemala.

WLKrieg/hhm

C O P Y

PARTIDO UNIFICACION ANTICOMUNISTA
PUA
12 Avenida Sur, Número 1
Guatemala, C. A.

November 23, 1953

This Organization was formed civically on July 3, 1947, at 7a Avenida Norte 10, Guatemala City, Guatemala, and was called "UNIFICACION CIVICA DE DEFENSA SOCIAL CONTRA EL COMUNISMO"; the statutes and manifest was sent to the American Embassy in this city, and in turn supposedly sent to Washington. After one year of struggle against communism, we decided to form a Party legally, in accordance with the laws of Guatemala, with the name of PARTIDO UNIFICACION ANTICOMUNISTA" (P U A), on Oct. 13, 1948. This Party is transitory, and is only for combatting communism, and the persons who formed this party are liberals and republicans, but the majority republicans. We can assure that when communism is wiped out in this country with this plan, you will have a friendly republican Government here. At present we are sure of 60% of the population that are against communism, counting with the independent anticommunist civic organizations that we control.

For 714.00/11-2453

PROJECT FOR COMBATTING COMMUNISM BY ALL MEANS, CIVICALLY.

1.- Adequate technical organization according to seriousness of circumstances, and revision, rehabilitation and reenforcement of all branches of this party in the Republic.

2.- Efficient and discipline agglutination of all existing forces of anticommunism, such as feminine organizations, laborers, etc. acting independently.

3.- Profuse diffusion of instructive propaganda, by means of radio and newspapers, as also pamphlets and posters, etc.

4.- Adequate transportation in all of the Republic, autonomy in all of the states, of propagandist agents, branch inspectors and periodical delegations.

5.- Supportment of Headquarters and state branches, in rents, salaries, office expenses and extra expenses, assign a certain quantity of disposable for reserve funds in case of emergency in all branches of the states.

6.- Committee of lawyers for defense of arbitrariness committed against anticommunists.

7.- Re-inauguration of "El Ciudadano," weekly newspaper of this Party and a Radio Station that can be heard in the exterior.

8.- An effective THREE months campaign to develop patriotism in a civic manner and prepare the inhabitants for defense against communism, with a cost of half a million dollars.

(signed) Carlos Cruz Eroles
Alternate Director

Guatemala

January 5, 1954

OFFICIAL-INFORMAL
SECRET

Dear Bill:

The two gentlemen referred to in your letter of November 24, 1953 to John Fisher arrived on schedule and have been visiting here. I have seen them on several occasions and discussed the matter in some detail. They do not wish to go back without something definite, but this is most difficult, though not impossible to effectuate. No formal memorandum is being made of their visit, but I will let you know when they plan to depart. When Ambassador Peurifoy is here on consultation later this month we may have something more tangible to report to him.

Sincerely yours,

Raymond G. Leddy

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William L. Krieg, Esquire,
Counselor of Embassy,
American Embassy,
Guatemala.

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